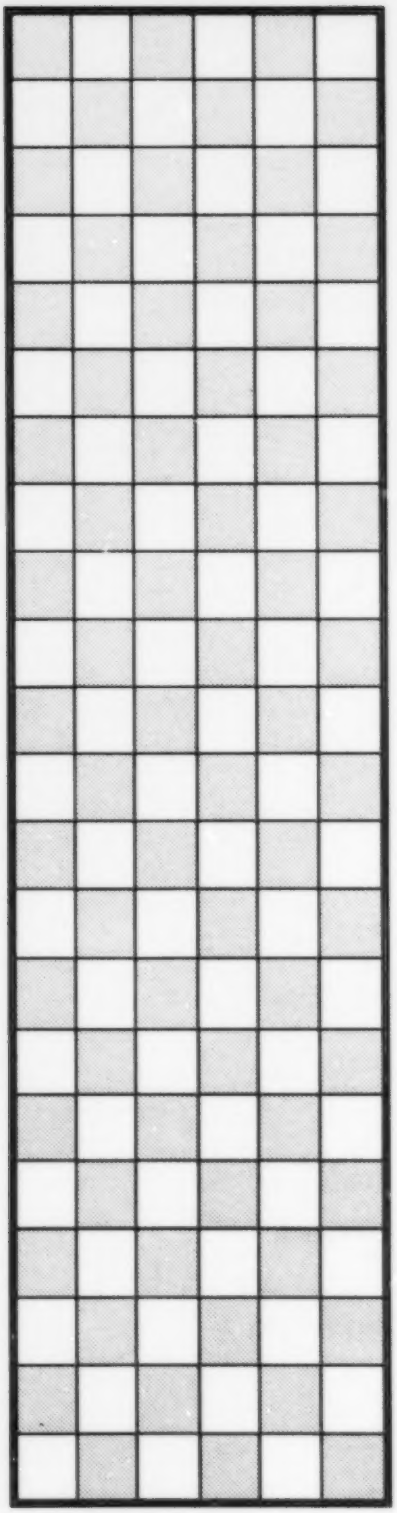

1990 British Columbia Student Drug Use Survey:

SUMMARY REPORT

TRY
The Responsibility is Yours.

Alcohol and Drug Programs
B.C. Ministry of Health and
Ministry Responsible for Seniors

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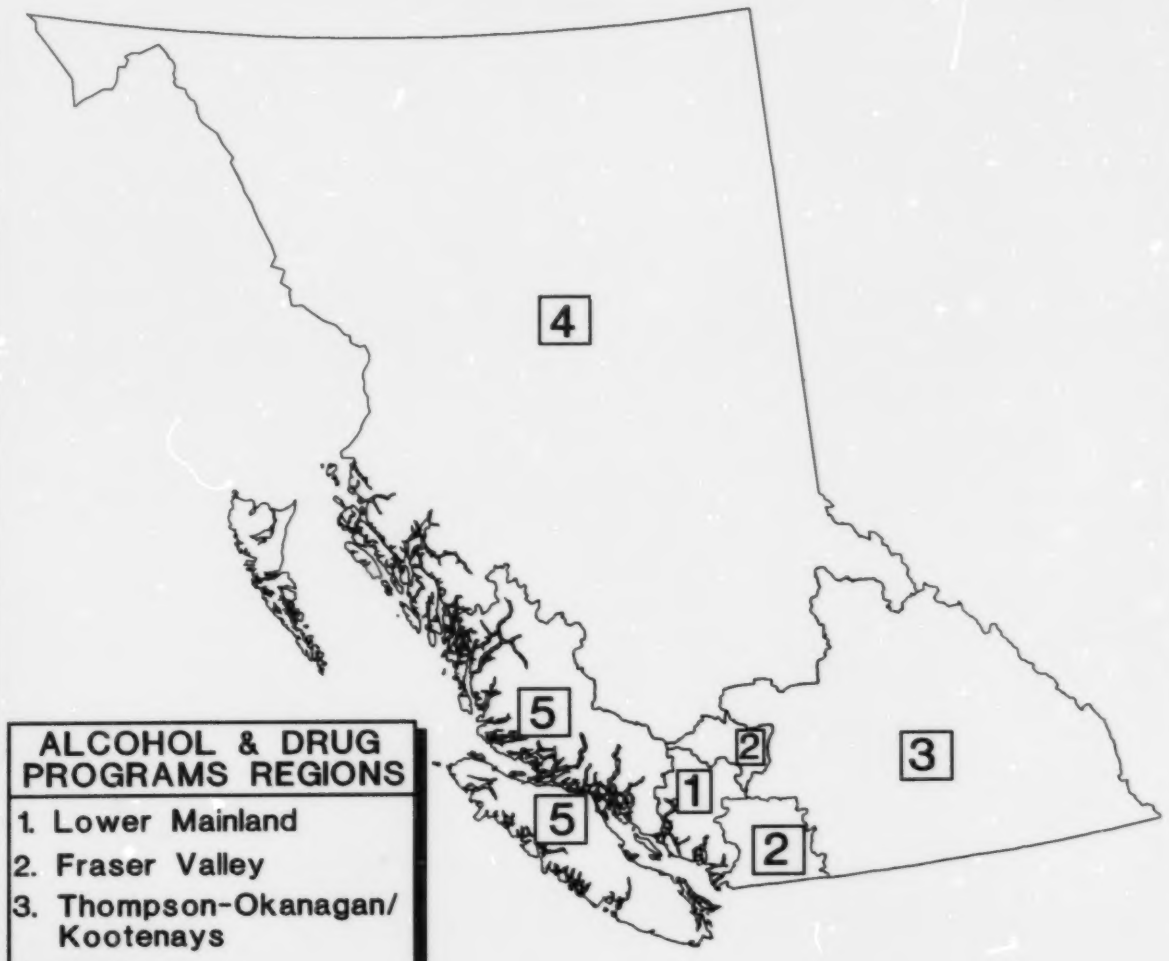
PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Alcohol and Drug Programs Regions



ALCOHOL & DRUG PROGRAMS REGIONS

1. Lower Mainland
2. Fraser Valley
3. Thompson-Okanagan/ Kootenays
4. North
5. Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands, and Central Coast

Prepared for:
Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors

Source:
Planning and Statistics Division
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Nov. 1991

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Preface

The 1990 school survey of British Columbia's adolescents was designed to obtain information about the patterns and extent of alcohol and other drug use among this cohort of youths. The intent of the survey was to gather current information from students themselves on drug consumption and to reveal temporal trends based on comparison with results from the 1987 adolescent survey.

Large scale surveys of this type afford the opportunity to learn about the perceptions and substance use habits of the "average" high school student. In addition, trends that reveal a reduction in reported drug consumption over time, such as those reported here may reflect changes in awareness of the hazards of use and abuse of certain substances among this province's youth.

This information is intended to help describe and understand under-age alcohol and other drug use. Information derived from provincial surveys such as this one represent the best available data on substance use among high school students. While these findings may be used as one source on which to base policy and program development, caution must be exercised in interpreting such data because of limitations inherent in the survey approach to studying drug use.

Due to the sensitive nature surrounding personal drug use, students may underreport their actual use. Moreover, because participation in the survey was voluntary, the sample of students surveyed may not fully represent the larger population of all high school students. The absenteeism rate on the day the survey was administered was found to be somewhat higher than usual and two per cent of students in attendance at the schools selected for inclusion in the sample refused to participate. Finally, adolescents with severe substance abuse problems may no longer attend school and thus, would not be captured in this sample. The results of this study can therefore only be generalized to students in attendance at B.C. high schools during the 1989-1990 school year.

It should be noted, however, that these limitations affect all survey data and are not unique to this study. As such, they do not undermine the value of this information to those concerned with the onset of alcohol and drug use among British Columbia's youth and to those following population trends in drug consumption.

1990 British Columbia Student Drug Use Survey: Summary Report

I. Introduction:

Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP), Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors, is responsible for planning, funding and coordinating prevention and treatment programs related to the abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Alcohol and Drug Programs considers drug use among the adolescent population, in particular, a target group of high priority. One source of information on drug use prevalence among youth is survey data that document patterns of use at different points in time. Several provinces have now conducted such surveys to measure trends in consumption.

Surveys of student alcohol and other drug use were conducted by ADP in the Vancouver School District every four years from 1970 through 1982. In 1987, the first province-wide survey of student alcohol and other drug use was conducted. The 1987 provincial survey permitted aggregation of responses by gender and grade within the five ADP administrative regions.

The 1987 survey was designed as a baseline against which trends could be determined by replicating the study at various time intervals. The 1990 survey results reported in this document provide data from the first such replication. This survey adhered closely to the 1987 instrument and methods followed in the previous survey.

The 1990 survey examined the nature and extent of self-reported alcohol and drug use by students in Grades 8 through 12 in the public school system in British Columbia. This report summarizes the results from that survey.

II. Methods:

The survey was designed to obtain data that would be representative of British Columbia adolescents in grades 8 through 12 of the public school system. A total of 662 secondary school classrooms were sampled, representing 139 schools in 24 school districts. This resulted in a sample of 14,140 adolescents. After inconsistent data were deleted, the dataset contained 6,413 males and 6,208 females (gender was not stated by 123 respondents), for a total of 12,744 students.

The sampling process was based on a stratified, modified multistage cluster design, in which school districts, individual schools and numbers of classes were selected using a random number process. The sample was sufficiently large to examine prevalence rates on a regional basis. The survey instrument was a self-administered, anonymous 67-item questionnaire. The 1990 survey was a replication of the 1987 study with minor modifications to improve validity and reflect current drug practices. The format was developed from *Guidelines for the Development of Canadian Surveys of Drug Use Among Students*, and was similar to questionnaires used recently for surveys in other provinces.

III. Results:

The major survey results are presented in five sections. The first section provides a summary of general findings. A more detailed account of the survey results for self-reported drug use is presented in section two. The third section examines high risk use among adolescents. Section four documents province-wide changes in drug use from 1987 to 1990. The final section briefly examines the use of alcohol, cannabis and tobacco by students in B.C., Ontario and New Brunswick.

1. Summary

Alcohol was the most commonly reported drug used by students in this survey. This finding is consistent with other provinces. Among B.C. students, 72.3 per cent stated they had used alcohol in the year preceding the survey. Substantial rates of use were also reported for tobacco (26.8 per cent), cannabis (23.1 per cent), prescription barbiturates (12.4 per cent) and hallucinogens (10.4 per cent). Cocaine use was reported by 5.7 per cent of respondents, while 2.4 per cent reported using steroids.

There were no differences in the percentages of males and females who reported consuming alcohol, at least over the past year. Males, however, acknowledged drinking more frequently and drinking more on each occasion than their female counterparts. Males were also more likely than females to report problem behaviour due to alcohol use, including aggression, drinking and driving, and police reprimands.

A higher percentage of females than males reported using tobacco, barbiturates, stimulants (without a prescription) and tranquilizers. Survey responses revealed that more males than females used cannabis, glue, solvents, heroin, speed, cocaine, crack, PCP, hallucinogens, LSD and steroids. The rates of self-reported use of alcohol and stimulants (with a prescription) were not influenced by gender.

Small regional differences in the consumption of alcohol and other drugs were observed. The number of respondents reporting the use of any drug in the last 12 months was lowest in the Lower Mainland and highest in

the Thompson-Okanagan/Kootenays and Island/Coast regions.

In the Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Central Coast region, adolescents reported the highest rates of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis use. A higher proportion of students in this region also reported use of cocaine, hallucinogens (other than LSD), and tranquilizers for non-medical purposes (the latter shared with the Thompson-Okanagan/Kootenays).

The Fraser Valley region had the highest frequency of users of glue, solvents, crack, PCP, LSD and medical use of stimulants. The use of tranquilizers (medical and non-medical), stimulants (non-medical) and speed was highest in the Thompson-Okanagan/Kootenays region. The North region led in medical use of barbiturates and in steroid use.

Substantial differences in most substances by grade were apparent. Grade by grade increases in use were observed for tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, cocaine and hallucinogens other than LSD. Most other drug use was highest in grade 11 and dropped in grade 12. Glue and solvent use tended to diminish with increasing grade level. (*It should be noted that these rates refer only to students in school on the day the survey was administered and does not include students who were absent or may have dropped out of school.*)

Adolescents perceived alcohol to be the easiest drug to obtain. More than three quarters of grade 8 adolescents found alcohol "fairly easy" or "very easy" to obtain. Perceived ease of access to most drugs increased with increasing grade.

Approximately 24 per cent of students reported a pattern of use that placed them at high risk for substance abuse. High risk use was more common in higher grades (10, 11, 12) than lower grades (8, 9).

Personal and social problems associated with alcohol use were reported by a substantial proportion of British Columbia adolescents. For example, 21.6 per cent of students admitted to being drunk at least once in the previous four weeks and approximately one-quarter (27.6 per cent) stated that they had five or more drinks on at least one occasion during this period. More than one-third (37.1 per cent) of adolescents had gone on weekend drinking sprees at least once in their lives; 17.5 per cent reported aggressive or destructive behaviour due to alcohol; and 12.1 per cent had been warned by the police because of alcohol use.

Having one or more alcoholic drinks before breakfast or instead of breakfast at least once in their lives was reported by 13.8 per cent of the students, while 26.4 per cent indicated that they had, on at least one occasion, experienced serious memory loss due to drinking. It is noteworthy that over 40 per cent of adolescent drinkers reported that their parents do not know how much they drink.

Reports of prescription barbiturate use were relatively high among those surveyed and did not differ a great deal by gender or grade. Overall use was 12.3 per cent, ranging from 9.4 per cent in the Lower Mainland Region to 15.4 per cent in the North Region. Reported use of prescribed stimulants (5.5 per cent overall) did not vary by gender, was highest in grade 9 (6.3 per cent), and had a range between regions from 4.2 per cent (Lower Mainland) to 6.6 per cent (Fraser Valley).

Tranquilizer use by prescription (4.0 per cent overall) was more commonly reported by females and generally increased with increasing grade.[1]

Use of crack within the past year was reported by 1.6 per cent of students. Cocaine use was reported by 5.7 per cent, and steroids by 2.4 per cent. Steroid use was reported significantly more often by males (4.2 per cent) than females (0.5 per cent).

Three-quarters (76.3 per cent) of students reported that their first drug experience was with alcohol. Smaller numbers first tried tobacco (17.4 per cent) or cannabis (3.7 per cent). Only 2.6 per cent of the sample used a substance other than these three as their first experience with drugs.

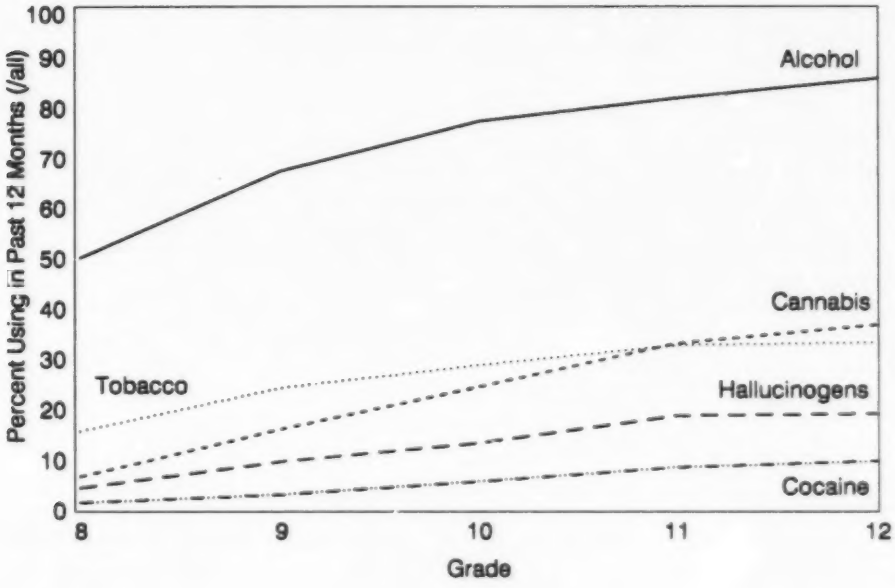
Comparisons between the 1987 and 1990 surveys reflect a reduction in the self-reported use of most drugs. These reductions were most evident in grade 8 students, the youngest cohort of the adolescents surveyed (*see page 11 for further details*).

2. Self-Reported Drug Use

Eighty-one per cent of survey respondents reported using at least one drug during the 12 months. Table 1 reveals the regional patterns of self-reported use of any drug (including alcohol) over this time frame. A trend to increasing drug use with grade level was found. In Figure 1, the percentage of students reporting use of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, hallucinogens and cocaine in grades 8 through 12 is shown.

Table 1: Self-reported Use of Any Drug in Previous 12 Months					
Total	**Lower Mainland**	**Fraser Valley**	**Thompson/ Kootenays**	**North**	**Island Coast**
81.1 per cent	76.8 per cent	80.5 per cent	84.3 per cent	83.5 per cent	84.4 per cent

Figure 1: **Self-reported Alcohol, Tobacco, Cannabis, Hallucinogens and Cocaine Use by Grade**



The following table reports the 1990 survey results for individual drugs.

Table 2: Self-reported Use of Individual Drugs in Previous 12 Months (per cent) 1990	
Alcohol	72.3
Tobacco	26.8
Cannabis	23.1
Medical barbiturates	12.3
Other hallucinogens	10.4
LSD	8.7
Non-medical stimulants	6.6
Cocaine	5.7
Medical stimulants	5.4
Medical tranquilizers	4.1
Speed	3.8
Non-medical tranquilizers	3.4
Solvents	2.8
Steroids	2.4
Glue	2.1
PCP	1.8
Crack	1.6
Heroin	1.5

Alcohol

- Alcohol, the most commonly used drug, was consumed by 72.3 per cent of students within the past 12 months (those who only had a sip of alcohol were not considered to be users). About 52 per cent of adolescents surveyed had used alcohol in the last four weeks and almost one in five reported drinking at least weekly.

- No differences in the percentages of male and female drinkers were observed, although males reported a heavier[2] and more frequent drinking pattern than females. Among drinkers, 22.0 per cent of males and 15.5 per cent of females drank at least weekly during the past year.

- The percentage of drinkers and the amount consumed increased with grade[3]. For example, 50 per cent of those in grade 8 had consumed alcohol in the past year compared to 77.3 per cent in grade 10 and 85.6 per cent of those in grade 12.

- The percentage of adolescents who reported that they had consumed alcohol during the past year was lowest in the Lower Mainland region (67.5 per cent) and highest in the Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Central Coast region (77.4 per cent).

- The most frequently stated reason among students for trying alcohol was to experiment. Nearly half of those who had consumed alcohol in the past year endorsed the "to see what it was like" response.

  The most frequently stated reason for stopping alcohol use was "just experimenting with it and did not intend to use it again" given by 24.1 per cent of those who stopped drinking.

  Interestingly, 14.1 per cent of males and only 6.2 per cent of females stopped drinking because they "thought it might be harmful to my health". The minority of students who had never tried alcohol gave lack of interest as their most frequent reason, followed by health concerns. Of those who continue to drink alcohol, 35.6 per cent do so because "it is fun".

- One-quarter of those who drank did so at least occasionally when driving around or sitting in a car at night. Almost three-quarters (73.3 per cent) report drinking at parties when adults are not present.

- 43 per cent of adolescent drinkers say that their parents do not realize how much they drink.

Tobacco

- Tobacco use was reported by 26.7 per cent of adolescents within the last 12 months (those who only tried one cigarette were not considered to be users). About 20 per cent of students who smoked had more than 10 cigarettes daily during this period.
- More females than males used tobacco. For example, 30.6 per cent of females smoked within the past year, compared to 23.0 per cent of males. Nevertheless, the heaviest smokers were male.
- The percentage of self-reported smokers and the amount smoked varied with grade. The lowest rates of use occurred in grade 8 (15.6 per cent) and the highest rates occurred in grade 12 (33.2 per cent).
- The percentage of smokers varied regionally from 25.4 per cent (Lower Mainland) to 29.1 per cent (Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Central Coast Region).

Cannabis

- 23.1 per cent of adolescents reported that they had used cannabis in the past 12 months and 14.5 per cent had used the drug within the past four weeks.
- Similar percentages of males and females used cannabis in the past year but males reported a higher frequency of use. For example, 25.2 per cent of male users had used cannabis 40 or more times in the past year, compared to 14.0 per cent of female users.
- The percentage of users increased by grade, as 6.9 per cent of adolescents in grade 8 had used cannabis in the last year compared to 36.6 per cent of grade 12 students. The reported rate of use doubled between grade 8 and grade 9.
- Some regional variation in cannabis use during the past year was observed. The Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Central Coast region had a higher percentage of cannabis users than the other regions of the province (30.7 per cent). User rates in the other regions varied from 20.4 per cent to 22.9 per cent.
- 47.3 per cent of adolescents said that it was "fairly easy" or "very easy" to get cannabis. Perceived ease of access to cannabis increased by grade.

- Among those who had tried cannabis, the most frequently stated reason for trying the drug was "to see what it was like" (58.8 per cent). Those who stopped cannabis use did so for a variety of reasons including: "was just experimenting" (22.2 per cent), "not interested in using it any more" (18.6 per cent), and "have other things I enjoy doing" (15.6 per cent). Of those who had quit, 16.3 per cent of males did so for health concerns as compared to 7.3 per cent of females.

- 25.6 per cent of cannabis users reported first using the drug by grade 7, while 48.9 per cent first tried it in grades 8 or 9, and 25.5 per cent began use in grades 10, 11 or 12.

Recent Use of Alcohol, Tobacco and Cannabis

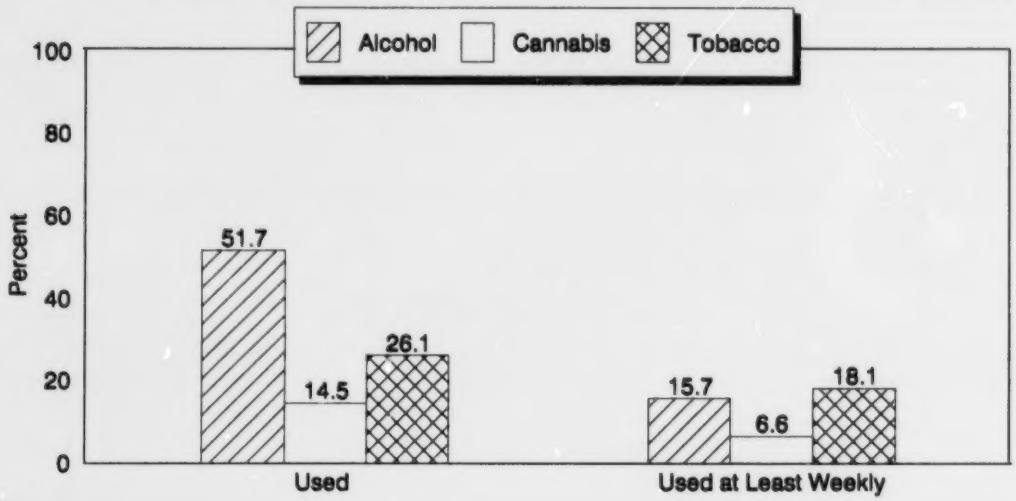
- Table 3 reveals a clear pattern of increasing use with increasing grade for the three most widely used substances. Reported use of these drugs, on a weekly or more frequent basis, is considerably lower than any use in the past month (see Figure 2).

Table 3: Self-reported Use of Alcohol, Cannabis and Tobacco by British Columbia Adolescents in the Last 4 Weeks

	All	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
ALCOHOL						
Drank	51.7	30.8	46.7	55.2	61.0	65.7
Drank at least weekly	15.7	6.7	12.7	15.2	20.2	24.0
CANNABIS						
Used	14.5	4.6	11.4	14.9	20.3	21.9
Used at least weekly	6.6	1.9	4.9	6.4	9.5	10.5
TOBACCO						
Smoked	26.1	15.5	23.8	27.6	31.1	32.9
Smoked at least weekly	18.1	8.3	15.6	19.4	22.9	24.8

Note: Drinkers exclude those who only had a sip of alcohol to see what it was like.
Smokers exclude those who only tried one cigarette.

Figure 2: **Self-reported Use of Alcohol, Cannabis and Tobacco by British Columbia Adolescents in the Last 4 Weeks**



Hallucinogens

- Approximately nine per cent of students reported using LSD at least once in the past year. Approximately 10 per cent had used some other type of hallucinogen (e.g. mescaline or psilocybin, "magic mushrooms"), while 1.8 per cent reported PCP use.

- More males than females had used hallucinogens during the past 12 months. This held true for LSD (10.3 per cent vs 6.9 per cent), PCP (2.3 per cent vs 1.3 per cent) and other hallucinogens (11.9 per cent vs 8.7 per cent).

- The percentage of self-reported users of other hallucinogens increased by grade; 8.7 per cent of grade 8 adolescents had used hallucinogens during the past year compared to 16.1 per cent of grade 12 adolescents.

- Students in the Fraser Valley region reported slightly higher rates of use in the last 12 months for both PCP and LSD than did other regions of the province. The Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Central Coast region had higher rates of use for hallucinogens other than LSD or PCP. This category includes "magic mushrooms".

Other Drugs
(Non-Prescription)

- Use of cocaine was reported by 5.6 per cent of the students. Crack cocaine use for the past 12 months was 1.6 per cent overall. Use of cocaine increased by grade from grade 8 (1.4 per cent) to grade 12 (9.7 per cent).

- Reports of glue and solvent use were relatively rare, as only 2.1 per cent of adolescents had used glue and 2.8 per cent had used solvents in the last 12 months. Use of solvents dropped with increments in grade from 3.6 per cent in grade 8 to 1.6 per cent in grade 12. Fraser Valley region adolescents had the highest overall use of both glue (2.7 per cent) and solvents (3.6 per cent).

- 3.8 per cent of respondents said they had used speed within the past year. More males (4.6 per cent) than females (2.9 per cent) had used the drug. Use of speed increased from grade 8 (1.9 per cent) to grade 11 (5.2 per cent) and dropped in grade 12 (3.4 per cent).

Steroids

- Steroid use in the past 12 months was reported by 2.4 per cent of the students. A strong gender difference was observed in that males (4.2 per cent) used more than females (0.5 per cent).

- Steroid use was highest in the North region (3.4 per cent) and lowest in the Lower Mainland region (1.7 per cent).

Prescription Drugs

- 5.5 per cent of the students surveyed stated that they had used stimulants with a prescription or because a doctor told them to. There was no difference by gender in rates of use overall. Use was highest in grade 9 (6.3 per cent) and lowest in grades 11 and 12 (5.0 per cent).

- A substantial percentage of adolescents (12.3 per cent) reported using prescription barbiturates in the past year and 4.0 per cent had used prescription tranquilizers. Use was nominally higher for females for both barbiturates (12.7 per cent vs 12.0 per cent) and tranquilizers (4.6 per cent vs 3.5 per cent) by prescription. No consistent grade patterns were observed.

- Use of prescription barbiturates was highest in the North (15.4 per cent) with use in the other regions of the province ranging from 9.4 per cent (Lower Mainland) to 13.9 per cent (Thompson-Okanagan/Kootenays).

3. Students at High Risk for Substance Abuse

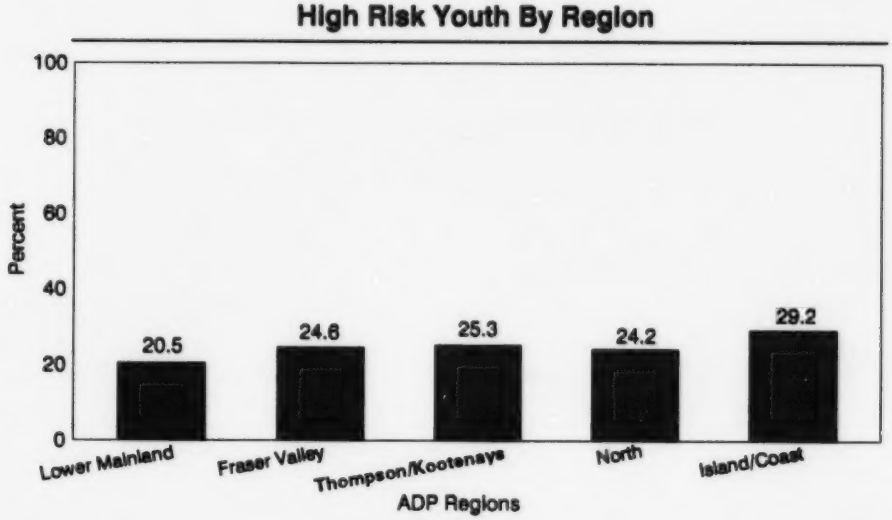
Substance abuse may be defined as the use of any drug in a manner that deviates from the approved medical or social patterns within a given culture. Clearly, not all students using alcohol and other drugs can be considered substance abusers. The early use of alcohol and drugs, however, places a proportion of students at risk for developing chronic drug use patterns and at risk for negative consequences of their substance use including failing to complete school and personal injury or illness.

For the purposes of the present study, patterns of self-reported use have been used to determine the proportion of students at high risk for substance abuse. Based on the criteria shown in Table 4, 3096 or 24.3 per cent of students may be considered in a high-risk category. Fifty-three and 47 per cent of the high-risk students were male and female respectively. The majority (75.9 per cent) of students in this category were in grades 10, 11 and 12. The younger students, those in grades 8 and 9, were much less likely to report a high-risk pattern of alcohol and other drug use.

Table 4: Criteria for the High Risk Youth were the Reported Use of:	
Heroin	1 or more times in the previous year.
Crack	1 or more times in the previous year.
LSD	1 or more times in the previous year.
PCP	1 or more times in the previous year.
Other hallucinogens	1 or more times in the previous year.
Glue	3 or more times in the previous year.
Solvents	3 or more times in the previous year.
Non-prescribed barbiturates	3 or more times in the previous year.
Speed	3 or more times in the previous year.
Cocaine	3 or more times in the previous year.
Other stimulants	3 or more times in the previous year.
Non-prescribed tranquilizers	3 or more times in the previous year.
Steroids	3 or more times in the previous year.
Cannabis	6 or more times in the previous year.
Alcohol	2 or more times per week.
Cigarettes	6 or more times per day.

The percentage of students from each of the five ADP regions who met the high risk criteria is shown in Figure 3. The lowest number of high-risk youths occurred in the Lower Mainland while the highest number was noted in the Island/Coast Region.

Figure 3:



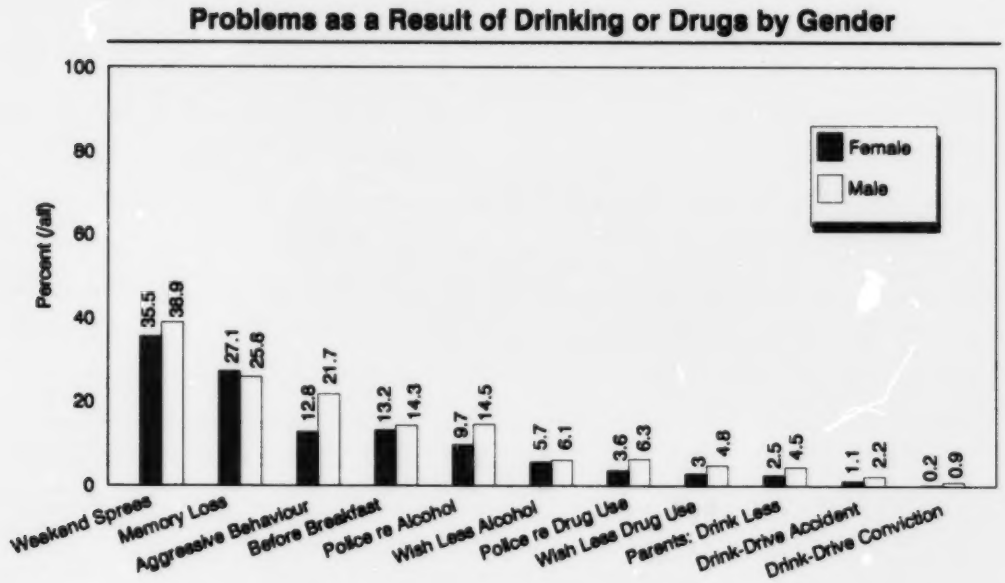
Several indices may be used to assess potentially serious or harmful patterns of alcohol consumption. The first of these reflects the average amount students report drinking on any one occasion. Approximately one-quarter (27.6 per cent) report usually consuming five or more drinks on one occasion.

A second index is problem behaviour associated with drinking. Drinking to the point of being "drunk" over a four week period was reported by 21.6 per cent of adolescents, with no differences observed between males and females. Frequent drunkenness, however, was far less common: only 4.1 per cent of males and 2.3 per cent of females reported being drunk on four or more occasions in the last four weeks.

Figure 4 presents the proportion of students reporting personal and social problems as a result of drinking and other drug use. The most common problems reported were of weekend drinking sprees (being "high" or "tight" for most of Saturday or Sunday) at least once in their lives and significant memory loss after drinking (being unable to recall events from the previous night). Aggressive or destructive behaviour after

alcohol consumption was reported by 17.5 per cent of students overall and more frequently in males. Other more serious problems involving infractions of the law were infrequent, yet nonetheless reported by a small percentage of students.

Figure 4:



In summary, approximately one-quarter of public high school students are reporting a pattern of alcohol or drug use indicative of potential abuse. A sizeable minority of students are consuming sufficiently large quantities, or using frequently enough, to place them at risk of experiencing personal harm or becoming chemically dependent.

4. Cross-Time Comparisons: 1987 to 1990

Overall, self-reports of drug use by public high school students between 1987 and 1990 have declined (see Table 5). Only five of the 18 substances showed an increase over the three year period for reported use in the last 12 months: prescription barbiturates, heroin, crack, PCP and LSD.

Table 5: Comparison of Self-reported Use During the Past 12 Months: 1987-1990		
	1987	1990[1]
Tobacco	28.5	27.7
Alcohol	74.4	70.7
Cannabis	30.0	24.9
Glue	2.7	2.4
Solvents	3.8	3.1
Non-medical barbiturates	4.6	4.3
Medical barbiturates	11.3	12.8
Heroin	1.7	1.8
Speed	6.8	4.2
Cocaine	6.1	6.1
Crack	1.6	2.0
Non-medical stimulants	9.1	7.1
Medical stimulants	6.3	5.9
Non-medical tranquilizers	5.0	3.7
Medical tranquilizers	6.0	4.3
PCP	1.9	2.2
Hallucinogens	11.3	11.1
LSD	8.8	9.3
USE - LAST 4 WEEKS		
Tobacco	29.6	27.1
Cannabis	18.3	14.9
Alcohol	59.6	51.8

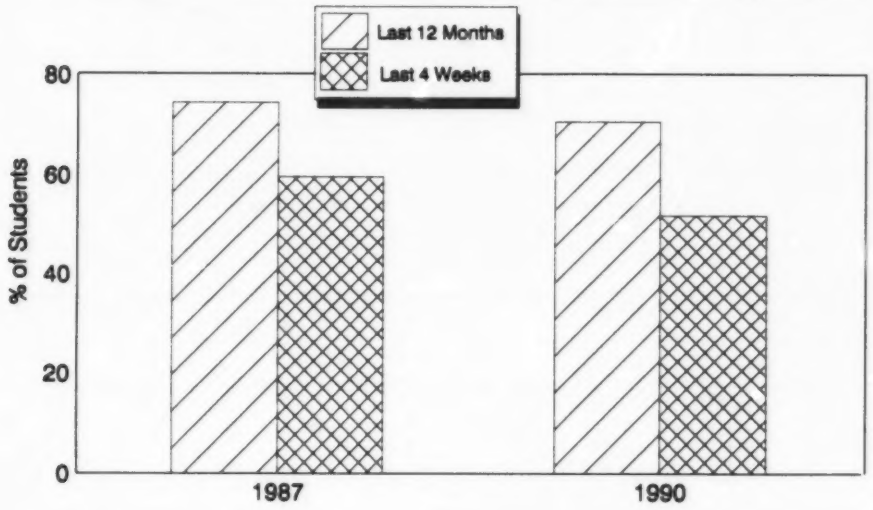
Comparison of student survey responses between 1987 and 1990 show that:

- Tobacco use remained constant (28.5 per cent in 1987; 27.7 per cent in 1990).
- The most widely used substance, alcohol, dropped overall from 74.4 per cent to 70.7 per cent (see Figure 5).
- Cannabis use showed an overall reduction from 30.0 per cent to 24.9 per cent.
- Inhalant use was lower overall in 1990. This was true for both glue (2.7 per cent vs 2.4 per cent) and solvents (3.8 per cent vs 3.1 per cent).
- Prescription stimulant use dropped marginally (6.3 per cent vs 5.9 per cent). The use of tranquilizers for medical purposes use dropped from 6.0 per cent to 4.3 per cent.
- Prescription barbiturate use increased from 11.3 per cent in 1987 to 12.8 per cent in 1990.
- Cocaine use remained constant at 6.1 per cent while crack showed a slight increase.
- Use of speed dropped from 6.8 per cent to 4.2 per cent overall.
- Non-prescribed use of barbiturates, stimulants and tranquilizers was lower in 1990.
- While LSD and PCP use showed increases, use of other hallucinogens was virtually unchanged from 11.3 per cent to 11.1 per cent.
- Steroid use was not surveyed in 1987.
- The most uniform pattern of decreases in self-reported drug use was found among grade 8 students. In 1990, relatively fewer grade 8 students reported using all substances (with the exception of prescription barbiturates) than in 1987. A less consistent pattern of decreased use was seen in the later grades.

- The proportion of students reporting problem behaviours in relation to alcohol and drug use was lower in 1990 than in 1987 except where infractions of the law were involved. Although very small percentages of students reported police warnings, arrests or drinking-driving charges, the numbers were either unchanged or very slightly increased from 1987 depending upon behaviour in question.

Figure 5:

Self-reported Alcohol Use: 1987 & 1990



5. Comparisons with Other Provinces

Recent adolescent drug use surveys utilizing similar questionnaires have been conducted in two other provinces, Ontario and New Brunswick. A 1989 Ontario survey studied alcohol and drug use among students in grades 7,9,11 and 13 in the regular school system. The Ontario survey is the seventh in a series of biennial provincial surveys begun in 1977 and conducted by the Addiction Research Foundation.

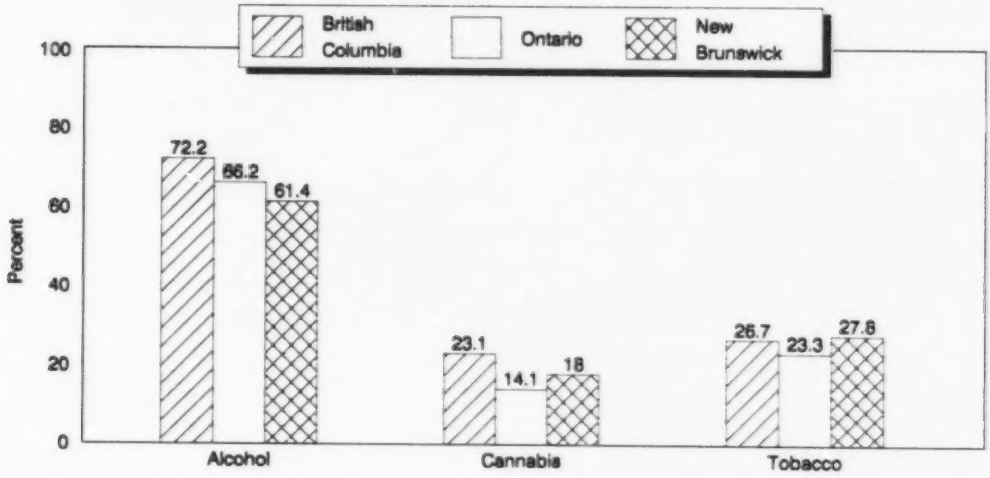
The New Brunswick survey, conducted in 1989 as a joint project of the Alcoholism and Drug Dependency Commission of New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Department of Education, involved students in grades 7 through 12 of the public school system.

Procedures utilized in the three provincial surveys were generally similar with some differences in survey design and sample composition. It should also be noted that the two comparison surveys were conducted one year prior to the British Columbia survey and this may affect the comparability of results.

In all three provinces, the highest self-reported utilization rates were found for alcohol, cannabis and tobacco. The following graph (Figure 6) shows the percentages of adolescents in each province who used these drugs in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Figure 6:

Percentages of Adolescents who Reported Use of Alcohol, Cannabis or Tobacco in the Last 12 Months: British Columbia, Ontario, New Brunswick



Notes:

The British Columbia survey (1990) included adolescents in grades 8 through 12 of the public school system.

The Ontario survey (1989) included adolescents in grades 7,9,11 and 13 of the regular school system.

The New Brunswick survey (1989) included adolescents in grades 7 through 12 of the public school system.

Alcohol use excludes those who only had a sip of alcohol to see what it was like. Tobacco use excludes those who only tried one cigarette.

The percentages of adolescents who had smoked tobacco during the previous year differed slightly among provinces. New Brunswick had the highest percentage of smokers (27.8 per cent) and Ontario had the lowest (23.3 per cent). This pattern is consistent with that quoted in the 1987 British Columbia Preliminary Report.

While the percentage of self-reported drinkers and cannabis users was highest in British Columbia (72.2 per cent), it cannot be concluded that B.C. has a higher rate of substance use among adolescents because of the inclusion of Grade 7 students in the two other provincial surveys. Because younger adolescents report less use of alcohol and drugs, this will lower overall prevalence rates.

These surveys indicate that alcohol is the drug of choice for most Canadian adolescents and that substantial percentages of adolescents in all three provinces use tobacco and cannabis. Table 6 shows the percentage of students in each province reporting use of each drug surveyed in the preceding 12 months.

Table 6: Self-reported Drug Use Last 12 Months (per cent) - Three Provincial Surveys

	1990 British Columbia	1989 Ontario	1989 New Brunswick
Tobacco	26.7	23.3	27.8
Alcohol	72.2	66.2	61.4
Cannabis	23.1	14.1	18.0
Glue	2.1	1.9	2.7
Solvents	2.8	3.1	4.4
Medical barbiturates	12.3	7.8	12.1
Non-medical barbiturates	4.0	2.2	6.5
Heroin	1.4	1.2	2.0
Speed	3.8	2.5	5.0
Cocaine	5.6	2.7	3.0
Crack	1.6	1.0	--
Medical stimulants	5.5	3.3	6.6
Non-medical stimulants	6.6	6.5	8.4
Medical tranquilizers	4.0	3.1	4.9
Non-medical tranquilizers	3.4	2.4	4.3
PCP	1.8	1.1	1.9
Other hallucinogens	10.4	4.3	5.0
LSD	8.6	5.9	7.9
Steroids	2.4	1.1	2.8

Note: Because the populations from which the samples were drawn differ in grade and age level, meaningful interprovincial comparisons cannot be made. New Brunswick surveyed 6300 students in grades 7 through 12; Ontario surveyed 3915 students in grades 7, 9, 11 and 13; B.C. surveyed 12,744 students in grades 8 through 12.

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A special acknowledgement is due to the many students across the province whose honesty and energy provided grist for the research mill.

Footnotes

1. *The reader will note that the 1990 percentages are slightly different in this table from those reported elsewhere in this document. The reason for this involves data cleaning procedures. In 1987, the data were presented "as is", with no records omitted except for a few cases which did not report region or grade. In 1990, a different approach was taken. In all reports except the 1987-1990 comparison, 1519 cases were deleted from the dataset because of inconsistent responses (that is, a respondent who reported using a substance in one question and never having used it in another). In the 1987-1990 comparison, by contrast, an "as is" version of the 1990 dataset is used so that the comparisons with 1987 will be unaffected.*

Small differences between 1987 and 1990 must be interpreted judiciously as these differences may be due to chance.

2. *Because of lower body weights in females, fewer drinks on one occasion may be equally intoxicating.*

3. *Because grade level is highly correlated with age, the finding that alcohol and/or drug use increases with grade may also be interpreted as increasing with age.*